# Soil, Water, and Riparian Resources

Preliminary Alternatives Handout

*Missoula Field Office, Resource Management Plan Revision*

*April, 2018*

## Key Points

The BLM's goals are to maintain, improve, and restore the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of waters; protect beneficial water uses; maintain functional and healthy riparian/wetland habitats; and, maintain higher-level hydrologic function within the range of natural variation. The BLM's goal is to also maintain soil productivity, and to prevent or minimize soil damage and loss while supporting multiple use and sustained yield management.

- Surface and ground water quality will be maintained to state and federal water quality standards, including Rangeland Health Standard No. 3 which requires that water quality meets Montana state standards. Best Management Practices will be applied to prevent nonpoint source water pollution, and further mitigation measures will be used on a project-specific basis. Other applicable laws, regulations, and policies will be followed (Floodplains, Wetlands, Streamside Management Zone Law).
- Site-specific development of project-level design features will be the primary tools for managing water quality and the functioning condition of watersheds, streams, wetlands, and riparian areas.
- Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs) management, as defined under the *Aquatic Habitat Preliminary Alternatives Handout,* for the primary emphasis of riparian-dependent species management, is incorporated into the riparian management goals that emphasize the water quality, hydrologic, and ecologic function.
- In general, restoration will be prioritized based on whether Proper Functioning Condition, water quality, and fisheries and aquatic habitat objectives are being met, and whether collaborative opportunities with other agencies or private landowners are present.

**Issues from public outreach.** Impairment status, assessing restoration potential, and restoring degraded lands, watersheds, riparian areas; livestock impacts to riparian areas, aquatic habitat, and water quality; consideration of natural processes and managing within the range of natural variation; road-related impacts to water quality; measurable terms & conditions for livestock grazing in riparian areas; site-specific development of riparian management objectives; and, defining riparian areas.

**Alternatives**

Most of the issues around soil, water, and riparian resources are addressed and guided by regulation and are therefore common to all alternatives. The reduction in resource use opportunities in Alternative C would likely result in a lower potential impact to soils, streams, riparian areas, and water quality. Likewise, any increase in resource use opportunities in Alternative B would conversely increase the potential for impacts.